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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO THE PEACE CORPS  
USAID FOR AFR/RSD JOE KITTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: GRA'S EDUCATION EFFORTS UNDERWHELMING

1. Summary: During a January 27 call by Ambassador Mozena, acting Minister of Education Narciso Benedito portrayed a national education system in collapse and the government's efforts to turn the system around. According to the acting Minister, only 37 percent of children aged 6-12 attend mandatory primary schooling and over one-third of all Angolans are illiterate. Benedito raised concerns over the quality and quantity of teachers and the lack of school facilities, especially in Angola's rural areas. The acting Minister highlighted the relative success of Angola's secondary schools and asked for USG assistance in English language instruction. He was very supportive of the Ambassador's suggestion that Angola consider requesting U.S. Peace Corps volunteers to help teach English at the secondary level. He was also very enthused at the prospect of USAID support in education as of FY2010, agreeing that teacher training is an area in dire need of more investment. Budget realities in 2009 will likely further delay Angola from achieving its education goals. End Summary.

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Not a Pretty Picture  
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2. Acting Minister Benedito described for Ambassador Mozena Angola's long post-independence struggle to provide an adequate education for all Angolan children, where six years of primary school are mandatory but only 37 percent of children attended primary school in 2008. Benedito said the first post-independence education system worked well, but that an external review in 1986 revealed a high drop-out rate and inefficient spending that prompted a call in 1991 to reform the national education plan. Work on the reform was only completed in 2001 with the passage of the Law of Angolan Education Standards, an UNESCO-reviewed and approved system that provides for six years of mandatory primary school and six years of secondary school in either the college prep, vocational, or normal (teacher training) programs. The law also provides for a diverse offering of public and private universities. Benedito said the end of civil war in 2002 and the extension of state control to previously war-torn provinces caused a rapid influx of students that overwhelmed the system. By 2005, the GRA tried to manage the problem by hiring 50,000 teachers that year and 27,000 teachers in 2006. The acting minister added that in 2009 the GRA expects to fill only 11,000 of 27,000 teacher positions and that quality remains a serious problem. In many cases, according to Benedito, teachers work overtime, teach classes in more than one school, or take second jobs to make ends meet. At the current teacher's salary, Benedito told the Ambassador, Angola will never get the number of teachers its children need.

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The Government's Plan  
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3. Benedito said the GRA set three priorities in 2008 to accomplish by the end of 2009: expanding the school network (new schools), increasing and improving the ranks of teachers and administrators, and beginning a system of teacher evaluation. Benedito described the GRA's efforts to achieve universality of primary education through a system of

recovery for older students. While only 37 percent of primary-aged children are in primary school, 41 percent of children generally are attending primary school - this includes older students enrolled in an accelerated program to catch them up with their primary studies. Benedito said the GRA hopes to expand overall primary coverage, including beneficiaries of this program, by 21 percent in 2009, toward 100 percent coverage by the end of 2015. Benedito added that the GRA hopes to use available resources to meet its goals, but that domestic resources are becoming tighter due to the global economy and the fall of the price of oil. Benedito said the GRA will depend on cooperation from international partners to meet its needs. He highlighted a Cuban program to fight illiteracy and an Israeli program to expand vocational education as successful examples of international cooperation.

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An Opportunity for Peace Corps and USAID  
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14. Ambassador Mozena raised with the acting Minister the possibility that Peace Corps volunteers could come to Angola and teach English at the secondary level and add expertise on the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The acting Minister expressed great interest in exploring Peace Corps opportunities. He said the Ministry would be the appropriate starting point to discuss allocation of resources and the potential scope of work. The acting Minister was likewise enthused with the prospect of USAID assistance in the education sector for FY2010 (requested in the 2010 MSP). Benedito jumped to agree with the Ambassador's suggestion that USAID might design a project around teacher training; the acting Minister hastened to name a point person within the Ministry with whom USAID can begin to coordinate.

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Comment  
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15. While it is encouraging that the Ministry of Education understands the serious challenges it faces in bringing 100 percent primary school coverage to Angola's children, the GRA is years away from improving the quality of education to match the increasing quantity. Entire generations of children are missing the opportunity to receive even a basic education, due to insufficient funding and a lack of teacher training, evaluation, and oversight. The collapse of oil prices will likely further delay Angola's achieving its goals to build more schools and hire more and better teachers, although GRA officials have publicly stated that education spending will not be cut. Overall, Angola's efforts since the end of the civil war to improve education remain underwhelming.

MOZENA